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SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

KATHMANDU FOR AMBASSADOR MALINOWSKI AND USAID DIRECTOR CLARK
STATE FOR AS/PRM DEWEY, PRM/P, SA/INS AND IO/EDA BEHREND AND
KOTOK

USAID FOR DAA/DCHA GRIGSBY, DCHA/FFP LANDIS, ANE/ESA
USDA/FAS FOR CHAMBLISS/TILSWORTH/GAINOR
GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR MOLEY, RMA LYNCH AND NKYLOH/USAID
USUN FOR AMBASSADOR NEGROPONTE AND MLUTZ
BRUSSELS FOR USAID/LERNER
NSC OR JDWORKEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAD](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [KUNR](#) [WFP](#) [UNHCR](#)

SUBJECT: WFP BOARD APPROVES NEPAL PROTRACTED RELIEF AND
RECOVERY OPERATION (PRRO) VALUED AT U.S. DOLLARS (USD) 7.59
MILION - 19,226 METRIC TONS

REF: (A) 03 ROME 1295

SUMMARY

1. The WFP Executive Board, at its first regular session (February 23-26), approved a Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Nepal. The project 10058.3, entitled Food Assistance to Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, is for twelve months (July 2004-June 2005), and covers 99,600 beneficiaries. Total cost to WFP is USD 7.59 million. Over the life-of-project, WFP will supply (subject to the availability of funds) a total of 19,226 metric tons of food aid. End summary.

Background

. Refugees from Bhutan - mostly ethnic Nepalis - began fleeing to Nepal in late 1990, with the influx peaking in 1992. The population is now stabilized in seven camps in Eastern Nepal, and it appears that most Bhutanese refugees prefer to return to Bhutan. In 2003, Nepalese and Bhutanese Joint Verification Teams completed the verification and categorization of refugees in Khudunabari Camp. Those refugees in Categories (I) Bhutanese citizens compelled to leave Bhutan; (II) Bhutanese who voluntarily left Bhutan; and (IV) alleged criminals were scheduled to be offered repatriation to Bhutan in February 2004. However, an incident on December 22, 2003, in which refugees attacked Bhutanese officials in Khudunabari Camp, resulted in the postponement of the repatriation. Displeased with the stated terms and conditions for return, Bhutanese refugee leaders demand that returnees regain Bhutanese citizenship as well as access to their original land and employment opportunities. UNHCR announced plans in October 2003 to gradually phase out its assistance in the camps over a two-year period while focusing on fostering self-reliance activities, referring vulnerable cases for resettlement, and ensuring any returns to Bhutan are voluntary. UNHCR has already begun cutting assistance in 2004.

U.S. intervention in support of approval of the Nepal PRRO

3. Herewith the essence of the supportive U.S. intervention:

-The USG continues to urge both Nepal and Bhutan to provide durable solutions for the more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Both Governments need to promptly reengage the bilateral process to prepare for their repatriation and local integration. Specific concerns raised by the refugees about the terms and conditions for return should be addressed.

-USDEL encourages WFP to monitor how its operations in the Bhutanese refugee camps will be affected by UNHCR's reduced assistance. We urge the UN to ensure that the basic needs of the Bhutanese refugees are met as Bhutan and Nepal revisit next steps on repatriation and local integration.

-USDEL remains concerned with the fragile security situation that impacts not only UN staff but also the camp population in general.

4. Other delegations were supportive of WFP's efforts.

WFP's Country Director responds

15. WFP's Country Director for Nepal (Ms. Erika Joergensen) reported that UNHCR has effectively ceased its support for the Joint Verification process. Nepal-Bhutan "talks," in her view, are at a "standstill." She confirmed that the Government of Nepal has removed permanent police points in the camps, which in turn has heightened camp insecurity. Moreover, in October 2003, both districts hosting the camps were declared Phase 3 by the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), restricting United Nations staff to essential monitoring.

Donor support to WFP Nepal's ongoing PRRO 10058.2 covering the period July 2003-June 2004

16. U.S. contributions against the present WFP Nepal PRRO total USD 902,321 (2,021 metric tons). The PRRO's major donor is the European Community (ECHO), which has contributed USD 2.37 million (6,682 metric tons). Note. Overall contributions to the ongoing program through January 9, 2004 are USD 6.9 million (19,574 metric tons), against an operations target of USD 8.57 million (20,044 metric tons). End note.

Executive Board approval

17. The WFP Board approved the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for Nepal. The project 10058.3, entitled Food Assistance to Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, is for twelve months (July 2004-June 2005), and covers 99,600 beneficiaries. Total cost to WFP is USD 7.59 million. Over the life-of-project, WFP will supply (subject to the availability of funds) a total of 19,226 metric tons of food aid. Hall

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